DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 247 674 EC 170 008

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TITLE So You Want to Be Inviting? A Study to Improve Invitational Theory and Practice in a Special Education Setting.
PUB DATE Apr 84
NOTE 25p.; Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (68th, New Orleans, LA, April 23-27, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Problems; *Educational Methods; *Educational Philosophy; Program Effectiveness; Special Education
IDENTIFIERS *Invitational Education

ABSTRACT

Using the collaborative efforts of a teacher educator and a classroom teacher, this study attempted to implement invitational education (a perceptually based, self-concept approach which is referred to as a theory of practice) in a special education classroom for six children with behavior problems. Four questions were used to systematically approach the inviting process for the teacher and a journal was suggested to record significant classroom observations. The teacher records his perceptions of the approach, noting successful strategies (such as differential approach in programing for students' behavioral and academic objectives) as well as unsuccessful strategies. In reassessing the method and theory of invitational education, the teacher educator suggests refinements in the theory. (CL)

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So you want to be inviting? A study to improve invitational theory and practice in a special education setting

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, April, 1984.

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Abstract

Using the collaborative efforts of a teacher educator and a classroom teacher, this three month study, attempting to implement invitational education in a special education classroom, looks at the reciprocal relationship of invitational theory and practice. Part one of the paper presents the rationale and method developed by the teacher educator. Four questions were used to systematically approach the inviting process and a journal was suggested as a means of recording significant observations in the classroom. In the second part of the paper the classroom teacher presents his perceptions of the successes and difficulties involved in using the inviting approach. The inviting approach is described as a helpful tool for organizing the classroom and encouraging participation. It does not always work and tended to be put aside in difficult classroom "control" situations. The final part of this paper is the teacher educator's reassessment of the method of study used and the theory itself. Some changes in method and theory are suggested. Regarding the latter point, it is suggested that the range of convenience of invitational theory be more restricted than previously thought.

Introduction

If invitational education is to be a defensible theory of practice, then it should be useful in suggesting dependable and imaginative approaches to educational functioning. A real test of its defensibility is the extent to which it can be useful in the most difficult of teaching situations, situations in which a teacher is expected to exert strong control. This study, involving the collaboration of a classroom teacher and a teacher educator, examines (1) the ways in which some basic concepts of invitational education are perceived and applied in a classroom for students with behavioural disorders, and (2) the ways in which the theory of invitational practice might be affected by these efforts. Attention is paid to the ways in which perceptions, behaviours, and theory are affected by a teacher's intention to be inviting.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part will present a brief overview of the rationale and method for the study from the teacher educator's perspective. Part two will be the classroom teacher's interpretation, application, and assessment of invitational theory as used in his own classroom for a fifteen week period. In the final part, the teacher educator will reassess the method for the study and the theory itself as a result of the practitioner's efforts.

Part I: Rationale and Overview

> If a theory makes no difference in educational endeavour, it must be artificial.
>
> John Dewey
> Democracy and Education
> p. 328

Invitational education makes the claim of being a theory of practice (Purkey and Novak, 1984, p. 2). That is, rather than being a descriptive theory, purporting to give an accurate account of what is, it is a prescriptive theory, giving "advice or recommendations about what those engaged in educational practice ought to be doing" (Moore, 1982, p. 8). As was stated in previous research (Novak, 1983), "these prescriptions for professional practice should be judged on their coherence, empirical basis, moral defensibility, clarity, and usefulness in suggesting intelligent and imaginative approaches to professional functioning" (p. 2). This study is an attempt to see what difference this inviting theory of practice would make to someone who chose to take it seriously. It was felt that, in addition to being of use to a practitioner, an attempt to note how key ideas of invitational education were interpreted and implemented in a difficult, real life situation would aid in the clarification and refinement of invitational theory. Difficulties in practice can point to deficiencies in theory.

Recent theoreticians (Schön, 1983; Schubert, 1980; Tuthill and Ashton, 1983) have pointed out the inadequacies of epistemologies which separate theory and practice. For those involved in educational theory, this is an important issue; for those involved in an educational theory of practice, this is an essential concern. This study attempts to connect the practical concerns of invitational theory to the theoretical

implications of invitational practice. A teacher educator and classroom teacher worked together to see how their work might be mutually informative.

The method used in this study can be divided into pre-active, inter-active, and post-active components. Let me briefly describe each.

Pre-Active

The teacher educator and classroom teacher met before the school year began. The classroom teacher had considerable experience with invitational education beforehand (two Master of Education courses in which it was emphasized and the presentation of a paper on a technical aspect of invitational learning at a professional conference) and was given some of the latest material on invitational education, including the manuscript for the Second Edition of Inviting School Success (Purkey and Novak, 1984). He was asked to write his definition of invitational education before he looked at the new material.

Finally, as a way to systematically approach the process of inviting, the following questions were suggested as a basis for action:

1. What inviting practices are you doing that you should continue doing? (The idea here was to build on what was already positive in the teaching situation.)
2. What practices are you doing that you should discontinue? (Invitational education should not be just additive; thus an understanding of inviting principles should limit and put an end to some activities.)
3. What practices might you add to your teaching? (The basic principle of invitational education should provide a direction and strategies for practitioners.)
4. What practices would you not consider adding to your teaching?

(Invitational education should suggest a variety of strategies and be opposed, in principle, to others.)

Inter-Active

During the fifteen week classroom component of the study, the classroom teacher was asked to keep a daily diary. Significant perceptions were to be recorded according to the following format:

What happened?

How did you feel at the time?

How do you feel now?

What would you change?

(This series of questions was used to elicit elaborate perceptions of educators in previous research [Wasicsko, 1977]). Also, a few weeks into the study the teacher educator and classroom teacher conferred at the school to see how things were going.

Post-Active

Following the study the classroom teacher gave the teacher educator the diary and written report of his perceptions of the situation. The teacher educator had a final interview with the classroom teacher centred around the notion of what difference did it make in your teaching to be intentionally inviting. The teacher educator then assessed some implications this study might have for invitational theory. Let's now look to the classroom teacher's application of invitational theory.

Part II: Classroom Teacher Perceptions and Applications

Being inviting encompasses skills, whether they be innate or learned, which one employs in approaching his own profession. In teaching, these skills are paramount because of the interpersonal contact which is vital and the human relationships (either positive or negative) which will inevitably develop. These skills may be translated into strategies used in the classroom which will influence the effectiveness that a teacher maintains. The intent of this aspect of the study was to examine some of these skills and/or strategies and assess their practical application within the framework of creating an inviting atmosphere. This section is divided into five areas of consideration:

- The limitation of the study itself.
- Inviting strategies which I, as a practitioner, have attempted in the past and will continue to do so because of their apparent success.
- Inviting strategies which I had not previously realized but have found to be successful.
- Strategies and circumstances in which an inviting approach has been unsuccessful.
- An overall interpretation of invitational strategies and their practical effectiveness.

The Study's Limitations

The setting of this study was a Special Education classroom in a rural school system in Ontario, Canada. The classroom was a behavioural adjustment programme with a maximum enrollment of eight pupils. Throughout a fifteen week period in which the research was

conducted (September 16, 1983 to December 16, 1983), classroom enrollment was six students.

The study itself consisted of Action Research in which (a) the teacher evaluated invitational practice as the programme progressed (the role of experimenter), and (b) the teacher was measured on interprepation and application of invitational theory (the role of a subject). A case study approach with the students was attempted in which specific target behaviours from a teacher's behaviour checklist were noted for each student, prior and subsequent to the fifteen week period. A daily journal was kept which included general statements on classroom dynamics and attitudes and specific inviting strategies which were or were not successful. An informal assessment was done by the teacher on a weekly basis which helped to determine the effectiveness of some strategies. Also formal contact with the advisor prior to and on pre-designated occasions during the study was made. By doing so, the teacher was able to assess and be assessed on the interpretation of invitational theory.

Invitational Strategies Previously Employed Which Proved Successful

Through teacher training and experience in our education place, we all develop strategies which we feel comfortable in using. In my own practice, these strategies encompass three specific categories which were in the research that are supported by invitational theory.

First is a differential approach in programming for students with respect to behavioural and academic objectives. One standard form of structured environment, programme selection and treatment of students in a behavioural classroom does not allow for maximum personal development. In this light, suggested criteria for appropriate educational programming and evaluation were used. These can be conveniently listed as follows:

Programme Type	Skill	Motivation	Control
A	High	High	High
B	High	High	Low
C	High	Low	Low
D	Low	Low	Low
E	Low	Low	High
F	Low	High	High
G	Low	High	Low
H	High	Low	High

(adapted from Whittaker, 1969)

All possible combinations are considered (in high and low degrees) when one controls for the variables of a child's skill level, the motivation necessary to encourage positive work habits and the on-tap control level that a particular student maintains. It is recognized that among the various curriculum areas (depending on one's individual strengths and weaknesses) a student may assume several programme types. The important feature of classifying students into programme types as such is that individual behaviours and differences are readily observed among the students. This is critical to building on invitational theory's perceptual base of understanding the individual's view of himself/herself as a student (Purkey and Novak, 1984).

Second is the positive approach that has been developed toward students in the classroom under study. A major tenet of invitational learning is that "people are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly" (Purkey and Novak, 1984, p. 2). When one thinks of the typical behaviourally maladjusted student, one perceives a youngster who certainly has not been successful in his/her previous classroom and in general at school. As one source indicates, this self-perception could lead to development of a perceptual screen (Human Relations Laboratory Training Student Notebook, 1961) that enables him/her to see others only in a similar manner, i.e. as disruptive. Continual reprimands or demands which may not be relevant to the

student will only reinforce his/her negative self-perception. Seeing others as capable, responsible, and valuable does not imply that consequences for inappropriate behaviour be abandoned. Rather it is being argued that consequencing should be logical (to enable a relationship between the action and the result to be seen) and also that the "punishment should fit the crime". This implies taking into account the individual differences which exist among the students. Given the diverse circumstances which have led to placement in a special education programme as this, an action which may be inappropriate for one student may be, if not acceptable, an improvement for another. This reflects back on others seeing students as being responsible for their behaviour with the hope that they will also see themselves as such.

Taken one step further, this may involve the student in assisting to set his/her own limits and consequences. Not being an advocate of behavioural contracts for students, they were not employed in a strict written form within the time frame of this study. Verbal agreements, however, were discussed in which students had an active input regarding acceptable forms of their own behaviour. This is synonymous with Kauffman's (1981) suggestion that,

> children should be allowed to choose for themselves how they will behave except when they choose to behave in ways that are self-defeating, or their choice clearly is not in their best interests (p. 290).

I tried to structure the classroom milieu so that the students were made aware of their options and could exercise their own choice in as many areas of behaviour as possible. By heavily loading certain choices, students would usually choose a solution which I also favoured. Yet <u>they</u> had made the decision about how to act, not I. It is a simple case of putting the responsibility back to the original source. By

having students accept responsibility for their actions, it was found that a desired behaviour more often occurred; and that if consequences were to follow, they were found to be more readily accepted.

Viewing a student in a behavioural class as being a capable learner has reaped some notable gains. A pupil comes to mind who was continually making self-deprecating remarks or actions. He expressed an overt desire to be "punished" for his behaviour and was not able to work properly. Following repeated reinforcement that he was capable, this student (at the end of the study period) had fostered a feeling of worth in at least one specific academic area. Whereas before, a positive feeling of his ability in school was non-existent, a step forward to counteract this self-defeating attitude had been attained.

A third category in which invitational theory had supported my own style involves the co-operation in teaching that Purkey and Novak (1984) speak of. A type of "peer culture" has proven useful, especially in a behavioural sense. Students have helped each other make decisions regarding attitude; they have set their own consequences with respect to specific inappropriate actions and have largely ignored instead of "getting caught up" in others' actions which may lead to their own unacceptable behaviour.

The topics in some subject areas in which the students were encouraged to readily participate produced higher classroom interest and improved test results, in general. Specific strategies such as sitting or kneeling beside a student and a relaxing touch when he is having trouble with his work are less threatening than hovering above with one's hands on hips, or a pointing finger. The presentation of a "working with" rather than "demanding to" attitude establishes an encouraging atmosphere. Under no circumstances were the students sent

to the office for the principal to handle. Problems that occurred in the classroom were dealt with in that place, and included the individuals involved - the student(s) and myself. The area of difficulty at that particular time arose in my presence, so I was a part of the problem. To remove the student to a new setting with another individual in an attempt to rectify the problem may lead to misinterpretation. The issues involved could very easily be skirted. If privacy was required, the back of the room or just outside of the open classroom door would suffice. The students viewing their own group and the classroom itself as providing a psychologically safe environment has proven helpful in (a) bringing problem areas to the surface (as opposed to suppression or displacement of anger elsewhere) and (b) dealing with the problems that have materialized.

Inviting Strategies Not Previously Realized But Found To Be Successful

The research brought to attention two streams of being inviting that I had not previously appreciated. The first category has to do with the physical setting itself. The attractiveness, comfort, and freedom available in the classroom seemed to instill pride and reduce tension. A private area in the back corner of the room containing a rocking chair and sectioned from the classroom by a boundary of plants proved most successful. This private area, decorated with ideas and posters to bolster self-esteem, was useful for students either on free time or when some space of their own was required.

Students were allowed to move around in the class and work in different areas so long as they did so adequately. They were not "frozen" to their desks. This change in immediate surroundings, because of the mobility allowed, did not detract from their work habits; only once did a student have to return to his desk to complete his

assignment. Students in integrated classes would request the opportunity to write exams in the familiar surroundings of our classroom. The basic message extended to the students was that the classroom is theirs, in the same manner that their bedroom at home is theirs. The interest and pride that they took in the classroom showed evidence of this message being received and acted upon.

The second successful way of being inviting involved participation at school. At the outset of the study, there was one student who blatantly refused to attempt any work which he was not absolutely certain he could do perfectly. He did not feel invited (Purkey and Novak, 1984) to even attempt a mathematics problem that he was at all unsure of. This generally resulted in a two-fold dilemma, as not only did he not attempt his work but he also would fidget, make noise, or disturb others until I could lend assistance. During the first three quarters of the research time period, I repeatedly assured him that if he tried the question and got it wrong, we would correct it together; still there was little change in attitude. It was not until late in the study that evidence surfaced which supported the need to "feel invited" or "accept the invitation" (Purkey and Novak, 1984) to attempt to solve an uncertain problem. A small achievement? Perhaps; but a significant one undoubtedly. To this student, erring in his work was finally placed into perspective - it was secondary to taking part and attempting independent work. Difficult areas, whether they be academic or attitudinal, are easier to identify and remediate if they are exposed and not hidden. Finally this child felt enough security to take chances.

Unsuccessful Invitational Strategies and Circumstances

On occasion, being inviting, although appropriate, was also found to be insufficient. Students in a special setting, as that under con-

sideration, often are insecure or have feelings of inadequacy (Kauffman, 1981). If they sense a lack of control or good judgement ability on the teacher's part, these feelings are elevated. If such is the case, the overt behaviour of the students generally will deteriorate. It is the teacher's responsibility to judge the manner in which he/she will handle a critical situation (Kauffman, 1981). To take the time to understand and respond to a child's apparent innermost feelings is not always feasible or advised. Within this study, a very manipulative student would attempt to monopolize the teacher's time through continual demands or acting out behaviour. A very direct approach which circumvented the superficial issues was then more effective. Telling the student that the present time is not suitable to deal with that particular problem, and that if it is still bothering him, perhaps the recess period or on his own time would be more appropriate, is somewhat less than an inviting solution. Nevertheless, it is the child's problem (attempts at manipulation) and not the symptom (his behaviour) that should be treated. If a loss of external control is perceived by an immature student, there may be a need to regain it via external measures. In all cases, however, when cooler heads prevailed, in support of an invitational programme, the responsibility for the need of external control was redirected to the student. It is probable that he would want the responsibility for his actions displaced from himself to others, hence he would deliberately set himself up to fail. For the fragile ego, it may be easier to blame others than to acknowledge oneself as the originator of the problem.

A second source of invitational strategies not experiencing total success involved their transfer outside of the classroom. The inviting atmosphere which was attempted in this study was not duplicated in other classrooms in the school. Yet, mainstreaming is a major goal of

most special populations, and certainly of that under consideration here. There were some problems experienced when students were integrated into some of the other school activities with more external structure (such as a large classroom of thirty or more students) or less external structure (such as large group gatherings or bus rides to and from school). Structure is an important part of being inviting, as it indicates to the student an element of caring. Students with behaviour exceptionalities require consistent treatment (Lewis, 1975) and the process of normalization does not always facilitate this completely. It would be unrealistic to expect that total transfer of behaviour by students in all settings would exist. The fact that there is some transfer of positive attitude on their part is, perhaps, a more reliable indicator of the success of being inviting rather than looking for flaws in those areas where transfer of behaviour has not been evidenced.

An Overall Interpretation of Invitational Strategies and Their Practical Effectiveness

The judging of the effectiveness of any programme done by the administrator of that programme is difficult to attain completely void of bias. For this reason, a final evaluation is based on three intertwining principles:

a) The teacher's expectations and realizations during the course of researching invitational practice.

b) The support of the programme with an invitational base shown by other individuals connected to it and/or the students involved.

c) The communication patterns and interpersonal relationships which were developed by those most directly affected - the students.

a) A child who is deemed su[illegible]ble for a special education programme because of behavioural exceptionalities would obviously have experienced considerable failure with respect to regular classroom programming. For all subjects in this study, that failure had translated to both academic and attitudinal setbacks. This was not the first special education programme for any of the students involved. The situation was complicated by a diversity in personal histories and ages (ranging from eight years to fourteen years chronologically). Because of the non-homogeneity of the group and the abbreviated time frame of the study (fifteen weeks) any gains which could be attributed to invitational means would expect to be minimum. But gains, if appearing to be in small doses, nevertheless did come about. And, given the individual pathologies, perhaps these doses were not so minimal. Gropper et al. (1968) have stated that the amount that students benefit from learning opportunities afforded within the school will depend at least in part on how well or how poorly they adapt to the interpersonal and social environment created within the classroom. A student must not only adapt to the learning tasks but also to fellow students and teachers. Since the school milieu is intimately entwined with the learning process, the teacher has to be concerned with its total character (Gropper et al., 1968) and in fact the student's total being. Invitational strategies suggested by Purkey and Novak (1984) both in theory (a self-concept approach to teaching utilizing positive expectations) and in practice (group co-operation, recognition of individual uniqueness, and arranging a pleasant environment) have attributed in no small manner to the gains which were noted.

b) The need for "total treatment" of a conduct disordered child has been alluded to earlier in this paper. The components of helping a

student in this context involve not only the work place, but also those individuals who are involved with the programme and the student himself. Supervisory reports from both the school principal and the superintendent who have both visited the classroom echo a common theme related to the positive atmosphere and respect that students show toward each other and their teacher. Fellow teachers working in integrated classrooms in which students in this research were involved have demonstrated an openness toward inviting suggestions and ideas. Parental support of the behavioural programme has also been given. Their comments have been threefold: 1) the positive environment which is evident in the classroom; 2) the reporting forms evaluating the progress of their children are evidence of at least some success (in one case, for the first time a student is proud of his work); and 3) there is in general a good feeling about the amount that their children are actually learning. It is this type of support that helps to positively mold the troubled child, enhancing his feelings of self-worth. Invitational practices have led directly to the mutual support of both home and school. At a conference, one student's legal guardian commented that she had not before witnessed a "pulling together" as she then did. To have basically given up on the child would have been much easier than the investment which was obviously made by all staff members involved with that student.

c) Arguably, the optimum indicator of this research's validity is the co-operation of members within the group itself. This co-operation is based on trust, which is best developed through communication. Communication is a two-way affair, and the teacher of disturbed children will jeopardize his/her success unless he/she can listen skillfully to children, monitor their behaviour with understanding, and accurately

interpret the relationship between their verbal and non-verbal behaviour (Kauffman, 1981). Because students had been invited personally, all of our interpersonal relationships had benefited. In showing a very withdrawn child some interest in his birthdate, he proceeded to open up considerably, bringing into class several new presents (with a rather lengthy story for each) the very next day. By being professionally inviting, the students felt encouraged to work with the understanding that they would be academically advanced as they proved able. This promoted a favourable attitude toward school work. In describing the consequences of behaviour, the positive or the negative may be emphasized. The phrase "you may not go out for recess until your language exercise is complete" has essentially the same goal as saying "you may go out for recess when you've done your language exercise." Yet, the latter draws attention to the positive consequences of appropriate performance, whereas the former to the negative results of non-performance (Kauffman, 1981). In times of crisis, it was found that speaking quietly but frankly to a student with the understanding that "I am speaking to you with respect, and expect the same in return", was found to be more successful than getting into a shouting match or power struggle. To communicate effectively is, in a very real sense, to be inviting.

The students who participated in the study continued to have problems that required attention, even at the completion of the research time frame. External control was needed to be perceived by the students, and periodically to be drawn on. The belief system intact in invitational education is very healthy and provided a valuable framework to build upon. In affecting a positive behaviour change, many of the successful strategies could be directly tied to invitational philosophy.

Part III: Reassessment of Theory in Practice

Stepping back from the implementation and evaluation of invitational education in the classroom to the teacher educator's perspective presents several practical and substantive issues for consideration. Let's reassess the method and theory according to the three components used in Part I.

Pre-Active

The meeting with the classroom teacher before the study was intended to get a notion of how he perceived invitational education and to clarify questions he may have had. The definition he wrote out strongly emphasizes the interpersonal teacher-learner relationship. It was hoped that through the reading of the new material the teacher would expand his understanding to include ways in which places, policies and programme could be means to creating an inviting ambience.

The questions chosen to systematically approach the process of inviting were used in response to the query: "What should I do?". It was felt in the interview that the suggestion "just go out there and be inviting" was too vague and too threatening. It is interesting to note that the fourth question, stressing what not to do, was not used. Perhaps it is too negative and too vague to be of use. People do not seem to want to spend a lot of time thinking about what they do not want to do.

Inter-Active

Just after the classroom teacher began implementing the approach, the teacher educator visited him in his classroom to answer questions about how things were going. The teacher had read the material

provided, arranged the room in a special manner, talked to other teachers about what he was doing, and worked with the principal in setting up the project. He mentioned that he was paying more attention to the subtleties of situations and was doing more negotiating with students regarding classroom duties and consequences for misbehaviour. He stated that the most difficult situation was when both he and a student were angry. This was best handled by "cutting off" the situation immediately and returning to it later when both felt better. He also mentioned that he was stressing student responsibility more. Finally, the teacher said that he was able to maintain the inviting stance because 1) he did not live his job; 2) the students seemed to enjoy it; and 3) he tried to keep up with new techniques. Maintaining a balance in the other inviting areas was important. He seemed in good spirits and was looking forward to continuing the project. The teacher educator left and went back to the university.

In looking at the journal it should be noted that the teacher kept an anecdotal record of situations but chose not to follow the format suggested in Part I. Journal writing, usually coming at the end of the day, seems to be a difficult enough task without having to follow a set format.

The journal itself provided a wide array of information. The teacher shared his joys and frustrations, with the joys being more general and the frustrations being more precise.

Five specific comments from the journal:

1. Just because the teacher was attempting to think and behave invitingly did not mean he stopped thinking and behaving in terms used from other approaches, i.e. Behaviour Modification, logical consequences, reality therapy.

2. Sometimes a disinviting behaviour on the part of a teacher is the only thing to do. If one loses control nothing good can happen. What is one to do?
3. Once you tell students your goal is to be inviting, they expect you to continue being that way. They seem to have difficulty when they are removed from the situation.
4. Being inviting is a good way to get closer to students and allow them to take more responsibility. It is, however, very difficult to measure precisely how successful you are being.
5. Parents, other teachers and administrators seem to like the approach and its effects.

The themes of positive atmosphere, student success, and need for external control permeate the journal. Let's now look at the final component of the project.

Post-Active

In looking at the written report of the classroom teacher, a few comments will be made about the strategies kept, added and removed.

In terms of the strategies kept, the differential programme typing, general positive approach, and co-operative methods were perceived to be previously effective, therefore the teacher saw no need to change these practices. It might be that this mentioning of the previously used inviting strategies is a necessary psychological starting point. However, in many instances this may limit re-examination of these methods.

The strategies added emphasized the physical environment and student participation in learning. There was thus a move beyond the interpersonal to the total ambience created in the classroom. This was seen as an important way to get students to feel relaxed and confident.

The logic here was if children are at ease, they are more apt to accept invitations to learn.

The inviting approach tended to be discarded when there was a need for immediate action. Also, there was the problem that the students seemed to be having difficulty moving from an intentionally inviting environment to other situations. The possibility that students may become too dependent on an inviting environment was subtly raised.

In a final interview with the teacher, the question was asked, "How is being intentionally inviting any different than just being a good teacher?". The teacher mentioned that although the inviting approach was not too different from the philosophy he normally followed, it did give him some useful categories for examining his teaching strategies and student behaviours. In addition, the practical suggestions at the end of the Second Edition of Inviting School Success were very useful. The teacher felt, however, that there were times when the approach did not apply. There were critical situations where action had to be taken quickly. Later, when cooler heads prevailed, he could reapproach the situation in an inviting manner.

Implications for Theory and Practice

Can theory inform practice? Can practical difficulties point to theoretical inadequacies? Let's look at the first question.

From the data presented it appears that a general notion of invitational education can be of some use to a practitioner. If can provide a stance to operate from and suggest strategies which might work. However, practitioners, dealing with real life problems that will not go away through wishful thinking, often seem to follow the first law of wing-walking: "Never let go of what you have a firm grasp of until you have a better grasp of something self". It is difficult

to get a firm grasp of a general theory.

Teachers, faced with the need to be both inviting and responsible for student behaviour find themselves in a dilemma. "Gentle but firm expectations for self and others" (Purkey and Novak, 1984, p. 51) will not always be effective in stopping disruption; teachers are expected to be in control of the classroom and handle difficult situations effectively and efficiently (Webb, 1982).

Perhaps the way out of the dilemma involving the tension between the imperatives to be inviting and to be in control is to state that the inviting perspective is a theory of practice for normal states of affairs. It is a way to behave normally; it also may be the best means, in the long run, for establishing normality in very difficult situations. In immediate crisis situations an inviting stance may have to be held in abeyance until a crisis is settled. After the crisis, the inviting stance can be returned to. During the handling of the difficult situation, no unnecessary "less than inviting" methods are allowed. After the crisis the means used to handle the situation should be examined and inviting alternatives should be considered.

Using this refinement in theory, a person could handle crisis situations in forceful ways as a prison guard, psychiatric nurse, or teacher and still be an inviting professional. Being inviting does not mean one cannot be firm and deal with the most difficult of situations. It does mean, however, that a person is continually seeking an inviting way to handle recurring crises and is not resigned to the fact that they can only be handled in "less than" inviting ways.

Any theory, especially a general theory, has to be refined; its range of convenience may have to be limited. Even in limiting the general theory of inviting some difficult questions arise: What is a

normal situation? How does a person know if he or she has been unnecessarily "less than inviting" in handling a crisis situation? In attempting to answer these questions the "normal" inviting theory of practice will be further clarified. Invitational education does not operate from a set of eternal, universal truths; it develops from a set of working principles which are constantly being refined.

As a result of this co-operative effort to examine theory through practice, both sides have gained; a classroom teacher has developed more inviting practices and has helped clarify a theory which should be useful in teacher education. This clarified theory of inviting will not necessarily work for all people all of the time; it will, however, probably work for most people most of the time. Those are still pretty good odds.

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